



February 3, 2016

House of Representatives Agriculture Committee
124 North Capitol Avenue
P.O. Box 30014
Lansing, MI 48909-7514

RE: Support for Aquaculture Bills HB 5166-68

Dear Agriculture Committee Members,

We strongly support House Bills 5166-5168. This legislation is the result of over five years of work by the aquaculture industry, in conjunction with many partners to address the elements that are necessary for Michigan to develop a thriving and sustainable aquaculture industry. This effort began with a directive for our small industry to create a defined vision for the potential of aquaculture in Michigan and to take concrete steps to address the challenges to successful and sustainable development. In 2012, the Michigan Aquaculture Association, in cooperation with a number of participants, convened the first "Aquaculture In Michigan" (AIM) meetings.

The idea of AIM has been, and still is, to identify and discuss relevant issues that impede development of a sustainable Michigan industry. Since 2012 we have produced the "Roadmap Through Regulation", and then engaged in an integrated assessment project that engaged many stakeholders that resulted in the Association's "Strategic Plan for a Thriving and Sustainable Aquaculture". We have organized two study tours to successful farms in Canada, which have opened a number of eyes to the positive possibilities for aquaculture in Michigan. In short, the bills in front of you are the result of a slow and deliberate process to address multiple legislative needs for aquaculture in Michigan. These bills are not just about enabling net pen aquaculture in the Great Lakes.

Demand for access to fresh, healthy and affordable seafood continues to provide a strong impetus for the aquaculture industry to develop a balanced approach and show the world that Michigan can have aquaculture methods and practices that bring access to fresh, healthy, affordable, Michigan grown seafood without hurting the environment.

The Michigan Aquaculture Association has worked to ensure that aquaculture projects in Michigan continue to move forward to meet the growing need for sustainable seafood, while working with producers and agencies to ensure that our production practices are in sync with the need to conserve and wisely use our precious resources. There are a number of production methods embraced by our Strategic Plan which also calls for more land-based farms and enhanced R&D in the area of recirculating aquaculture systems, however net pen culture in Michigan's Great Lakes waters is seen as a necessary element for successful aquaculture in Michigan.

The report produced in October by the "Quality of Life Science Review Panel" provides a basic outline for the successful introduction of net pen fish culture to Michigan's Great Lakes waters. Acceptance of an Adaptive Management approach and the BACI Method will allow for a safe and reasonable introduction of commercial scale net pen fish farming in Michigan's Great Lakes waters, while developing the scientific knowledge that is necessary to intelligently and responsibly expand and manage aquaculture within the Great Lakes ecosystem.

As most of you are aware, opponents of aquaculture have introduced competing bills in both the House and Senate that would outright ban net pen aquaculture. The Senate bill would additionally ban nearly all of

Michigan's current production facilities, some of which have been operating without harming our resources for up to a century. The jump to ban, rather than to develop proper regulations is an irresponsible approach taken by opponents who have betrayed a clear ignorance of the issues and our industry. They have chosen to crank up the rhetoric machine and have been blasting out misleading and inaccurate information and just yesterday announced the results of a reckless and skewed poll targeted to mislead decision makers. Many issues have been thrown on the table and we would be happy to engage in a rational discussion of the facts and science that will demonstrate a responsible way forward for Michigan Aquaculture.

We hope that we can begin to develop cooperation with the Tribal Community, Michigan's Commercial Fishermen, Michigan's Sport Fishermen and Michigan's Conservation Community to build a responsible aquaculture industry that will help revitalize Michigan's working waterfronts and waterfront communities. Aquaculture is an economic opportunity that Michigan is uniquely positioned for. Our abundant freshwater can mean job opportunities for Michigan's hardworking families as well as vital working waterfronts that can diversify and coexist with recreation, tourism and other waterfront uses. Aquaculture is an opportunity to assure a supply of fresh, healthy and affordable seafood for Michigan and our region in a world of increasing uncertainty for seafood supply.

It is widely acknowledged that aquaculture must grow. The responsible approach is to develop a properly regulated, sustainable and economically viable aquaculture industry in Michigan, and not to allow the loud rhetoric of fear and ignorance to prevail.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dan Vogler', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Dan Vogler
President
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